

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **TOURISM**

DATE: **JANUARY 28, 2011**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
 KENNY
 BELDEN
 STRAINER
 GOODSPEED
 MCCOY
 CONOVER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
 KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
 PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
 TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
DANIEL G. STEC, CHAIRMAN
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
 THOMAS
 BENTLEY
 LOEB
JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:34 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Goodspeed, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2010 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Director of the Tourism Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Johnson presented a request for a contract with Benchmark Printing, Inc., to print the "Decks" posters, for the period from February 21, 2011 through March 31, 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$1,429.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. McCoy and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 18, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Next, Ms. Johnson presented a request to continue the Inter-Municipal Agreement with the Village of Lake George to provide funding for the Lake George Visitor Center in the amount of \$25,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 18, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson presented a request to continue support for the full amount of funding in the Governor's Budget for the I Love New York Gateway Information Center at Beekmantown.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 18, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Merlino apprised of a proposal received from John Diamond, Mayor of the City of Glens Falls, requesting a contract with Warren County to share the services of Peter Girard, Creative Director in the Tourism Department, for an amount to be established. Mr. Merlino stated that Mr. Girard may not have extra time to take on additional responsibilities. Ms. Johnson explained that the details of the proposal had not been finalized and reiterated that Mr. Girard was currently very busy with Warren County Tourism responsibilities. She further noted that if the proposal were considered, it would be appropriate to offer the services to all Warren County municipalities, thereby creating a consolidation of services. The rationale for the City, Ms. Johnson noted, was the expense and Mr. Girard added that the City currently used six designers and had sought improved consistency and availability. Mr. Kenny asked if there were any other inquiries of this nature and Ms. Johnson replied in the negative. Mr. Belden added that additional details were necessary for full consideration and Ms. Johnson apprised that the issue would be discussed with Paul Dusek, County Attorney/Administrator, and additional details would be provided at a future Committee meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Goodspeed and carried unanimously to table the request from the City of Glens Falls for the consolidation of services of the Creative Director, pending additional information from Mayor Diamond.

Ms. Johnson presented a request for a contract with Benchmark Printing, Inc., for the printing of the Rates, Dates and Events Brochure, for the period from February 21, 2011 to March 31, 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$8,003.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 18, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Due to the fact that there would not be a February Tourism Committee meeting, Ms. Johnson presented a request for authorization to enter into a contract for printing services for the fishing and boating map of Lake George.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Conover and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract for printing services as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 18, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson informed of a new concept which was introduced to the data base of tourism related businesses which was referred to as a "show only give-away" available to show participants. She said the give-away offered a free two-night getaway to be promoted at nine consumer shows in 2011, where users could opt-in for future promotions from the Tourism Department and/or the sponsors. She summarized the results of the first two shows. She said the hoteliers who offered the free nights received the email list for those who entered the give-away. Ms. Johnson reported an increase of 120 participants for the Sports Show as compared to last year. A show only promotion, she explained, was advertised in the show newspaper and other promotional materials created specifically for that show. As a hotelier, Mr. Merlino stated that he planned to opt-in for the next show.

Referencing the I love New York Winter Guide, Ms. Johnson noted the Lake George Area's full page ad on the inside front cover which was obtained at no additional charge. She noted that the guide had a distribution plan from the State and was available online with live websites accessible from the brochure. She informed of an advertising opportunity for the Department for which Mr. Girard designed the back cover of the NY Welcomes DVD which included distribution in the metropolitan area, the NY Thruway, as well as points in New Jersey.

Ms. Johnson noted that Mr. Girard would display a variety of ads he designed which included Adirondack regional ads, fishing, waterways, events, camping for NY State campgrounds, and magazine ads for Better Homes and Gardens, Cooking Light, People Magazine, Readers Digest, Redbook and many more.

Continuing, Ms. Johnson stated that she and Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, met with Amy Collins, Tourism Director for the City of Glens Falls, and she attended a meeting with herself and Peter Aust, Director of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC). Ms. Johnson said she would like to offer a reciprocating link from the ARCC website to the VisitLakeGeorge.com site. She further apprised that Ms. Collins and Mr. Aust had collaborated regarding the development of a monthly, County-wide calendar of meetings and special events to be produced through the special event contract with the Lake George Regional Chamber and CVB, which was similar to the monthly calendar produced by the Saratoga CVB. Both parties, she said, were interested in the opportunity to create more awareness among community businesses by recognizing visiting patrons of these groups and offered businesses an opportunity to greet guests and offer special promotions. Mr. Strainer asked why the County was not on the ARCC website and Ms. Johnson apprised that Mr. Aust would be looking into the matter which may be related to membership. Mr. Strainer urged increased collaboration with the ARCC and Ms. Johnson agreed and noted Mr. Aust's desire to collaborate. She apprised that a meeting was held which included herself, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Merlino, Mr. Dusek and the Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) Board of Directors to discuss a plan to move forward. She noted that Warren County gave a half page ad to the EDC in the Travel Guide, and noted the County's logo was not easily found on the EDC website, which would be discussed and improved upon.

Pertaining to monthly email blasts carried out by the Tourism Department, Ms. Johnson said she offered the EDC the opportunity for a blast pertaining to working and living in the area. She stated that Mr. Dusek and Mr. Merlino had responded affirmatively to the proposal which would be linked to the EDC's website. She also noted that an agreement was made with the EDC for reciprocal information exchanges pertaining to the newsletters. Mr. Merlino said the meeting was very productive and thanked Mr. Taylor for initiating it. He said he was optimistic for a strong collaborative partnership and cited the EDC's desire to work with the Tourism Department and Warren County municipalities, as well as to attend Council of Chamber meetings to facilitate informational exchanges.

Ms. Johnson reported that she and Mr. Girard had met with Mayor Diamond and Ed Bartholomew, Economic/Community Development Director for the City of Glens Falls, to discuss the new interior screens and the exterior billboard at the Glens Falls Civic Center (GFCC). She stated the Request for Proposal (RFP) was not yet complete and she presented the County's proposal to show 90 seconds of year-round video, with one or two ticker bars showing four Town events rotating within the ad. She also noted that the Warren County logo was placed on the exterior billboard which was impressive. She apprised of the new idea for the website which was "Visit Lake George.com for Scores of Events" which tied into the sports theme associated with the GFCC. Mr. Conover commended the Department for the idea. Ms. Johnson recognized Mr. Bartholomew for his spirit of cooperation and collaboration toward common goals.

Concluding her report, Ms. Johnson stated the Whitewater brochure had been distributed and apprised that Governor Cuomo had announced Kevin Adams as the new President and Chief Executive Officer of the New York State EDC.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, who informed of a meeting initiated by the NYS Division of Tourism, with Avi Kaptzan, International Tour Operator and owner of Kay New Century Tours, based in Tel Aviv, Israel. Ms. Brand stated that she had invited hoteliers to attend the informational meeting to learn of the new portal, VisitNYS.com. She expounded that International travelers were not aware of the variety of regions within NY State that were showcased by the website and offered a free opportunity for local tourism agencies to disclose their offerings to international tourist populations. She stated she would load the information into the site and noted an enhanced list was available to businesses for a fee. She summarized that international travelers were looking at NY City and smaller communities for different cultural experiences. Ms. Brand apprised that a FAM (familiarization) Tour was given which included several local hotels. Mr. Goodspeed stated this provided an opportunity to market the train and Ms. Brand informed that Mr. Kaptzan was intrigued by the concept of the train, and planned additional site visits for his return visit in the spring.

Summarizing the annual American Bus Association (ABA) Show held in Philadelphia earlier this month, Ms. Brand reported that she conducted 57 seven-minute

appointments with Destination Management Companies (DMO)/Tour Operators from regions throughout North America. She noted there were 350 tour operators in attendance and the show demonstrated a strong Adirondack presence which included the Adirondack Region Tourism booth at the Show's Marketplace location, with 14 additional delegates from the region and the presence of a NY State representative.

Addressing new promotional efforts, Ms. Brand summarized many popular new events which included the Last of the Mohicans Outdoor Drama, Railroads on Parade, Adirondack Folk School and Thurman's Foothill tours. She apprised that Ad Destinations Magazine was the official publicity guide for the ABA and featured a 21 page spread for NY State in which the Lake George region appeared on the second page. Mr. Conover asked if a better sense of traveler interest was gained from the interviews and Ms. Brand informed that tourists were seeing new and untrodden territories and not necessarily the largest events. She said they also sought to extend their itineraries while containing costs. She apprised that interests and types of clients and groups varied widely and ranged from student youth, which often included outdoor adventure sports, to adult age groups, which often included historical sites. She noted that the area was viewed in a regional sense with clients staying in Lake George and touring the surrounding areas. Ms. Brand informed that she had offered a brochure distribution program for those not part of a group tour, who could pay a small fee to have their brochures distributed at various shows. She reported the 2010 group tour survey was sent to 93 group tour oriented businesses, which she would report on at the next meeting.

Ms. Brand stated that promotional efforts included email blasts and she apprised she had compiled a database of group tour leaders and tour operators who valued informational emails. She noted the group tour survey was used to track the number of tours to the area and of 93 surveys sent an average of 10 to 11 responses were received. Mr. Conover underscored the need to track promotion results.

Pertaining to local outreach efforts, Ms. Brand apprised that the Golden Goal Youth Sports Park located in Fort Ann was under new ownership, and noted that a joint effort with the Washington County Tourism Department was underway to evaluate ways in which to assist in promoting the area to visiting sports teams and their families, as most accommodations/hoteliers were located in Warren County. Ms. Brand noted that she had also reached out to the new Park owner in this regard.

Continuing, Ms. Brand reported a confirmed event with Anderson Coach & Travel, who chose Lake George as the destination for their three-day 44th Birthday Bash; she added that 16 motorcoaches were expected for the September event. Another confirmed event, she said, was the United States Running Association's (USRA) half marathon scheduled for April. Although they were not awarded occupancy tax dollars, she noted, the event coordinator had contacted Mr. McCoy, who stated that the Town of Lake George would consider a funding request for the event.

Ms. Brand apprised that a FAM tour conducted in 2009 for group leaders from Hamburg, NY, had resulted in a group of approximately 40 people scheduled to lodge in the area this year. This was an example of how the efforts of the Department were often evidenced over time, she said.

This concluded the Group Tour portion of the Tourism Committee meeting and privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Girard, who referenced the eight summer-focused displays posted around the Board Room. In terms of cost savings, he explained, old banner stands had been reskinned to create the displays. He reported on two email blasts which were sent as a result of two significant snow falls. The first, he said, was an email to approximately 2,000 snowmobilers, and the second was a downhill and cross country ski blast sent to 130,000 addresses.

Referencing the Department's new Nikon D31 camera, Mr. Girard informed of the ease with which advertising material could be created using the camera. He displayed pictures taken with the new equipment, noting the advantages of in-house photography which included greater speed, efficiency, and more nimble and spontaneous coverage. He stated that eventually, the Department could produce internet-ready work. He apprised that the thruway kiosk housed brochure racks and ran the tourism promotion video every 10 minutes, as well as the winter DVD to ensure top-minded awareness. Large 6 x 4 foot posters featuring the ski areas were located in New Jersey's transit station subway platforms and featured the QR (quick reference) code for scanning via cell phones, which gave instant access to the ski page, he advised.

Mr. Girard stated that he met with L & P Media, who were awarded the bid for website design to discuss implementation, future-proofing strategies, navigation structure, the organization of the site for ease of use, dynamic content, and overall packaging.

In conclusion, Mr. Girard stated that the Adirondack regional email blast featured the Lake George Winter Carnival which was sponsored by the Tourism Department. The blast, he noted was sent to 102,000 recipients, opened by 14,000, and had 240 click-throughs.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tom Connors, Ad Workshop, who stated the winter TV campaign, which would conclude on Sunday, included a 30-second TV ad and covered the NY/Canadian north/south corridor, and the area from the Capital District west to Utica. He reported 3.8 million subscribers on Time Warner and Cablevision with a 29% increase in responses over last year. He noted there was one week remaining in the campaign and he would provide a full report on the results achieved at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Connors stated the lakegeorgeny.com landing page which appeared on the TV ad, boasted over 18,000 visits since May 1, 2010. He said he planned to continue the landing page in 2011 for which activity and results were analyzed using Google Analytics. He informed of a new program aired on the Sportsman Channel called the

Lakes Region Fishing Show, which included fishing in the Lake George region. The Sportsman channel, he stated, had 25 million subscribers and statistics indicated that 93% of this total were fishing and hunting enthusiasts. He summarized viewer statistics, such as average income and the amount of time spent on the sport. He said two 30-minute shows would be televised eight times each for a total of 16 shows, or eight hours of total viewing time, relative to fishing on Lake George. Each 30-minute segment, he said, included the 30-second Lake George fishing ad. He said dock fishing and deep water fishing would air in March and mid-summer, respectively. Mr. Connors read excerpts from a story written by Ed Noonan, of the Schenectady Gazette, which referenced the local program.

Mr. Conover opined that fishing was an excellent niche market opportunity which expanded beyond the winter and summer seasons, and included many regional streams and rivers in addition to Lake George. He noted a lack of parking for ice fishing on Lake George and suggested an area of opportunity could be surveys to winter fishermen to determine their travel ranges and fishing preferences. Mr. Belden noted that 375 people were already signed up for a fishing tournament to be held in Hague in February for which 550 participants were anticipated. He noted that the tournament had been a great success and many of the out-of-State attendees had returned to the area for summer vacations. Mr. Conover stated that this event presented a photographic opportunity and Mr. Girard concurred. Ms. Johnson noted that the Town of Bolton and Camp Chingachgook fishing tournaments would take place on the same weekend prior to the Hague fishing tournament and new photographic material was always pertinent.

In closing, Mr. Connors apprised that subsequent to the airing of the fishing program three weeks ago, he was contacted by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) who expressed their interest in airing the program nationally. The opportunity to nationally air two 30-minute shows pertaining to Lake George, he noted, would bear no cost to the County.

Mr. Merlino reported that he and Ms. Brand attended the Council of Chambers Board meeting recently which was very informative. He noted the pleasant and accommodating atmosphere in the Town of Bolton, as well as the lively and motivated hosts. Ms. Brand said it provided an excellent opportunity to meet with the Chambers.

Mr. Belden asked Ms. Johnson to ensure that the Town of Hague's ads would appear as they had last year in the I Love New York and Winter Travel Guides and Ms. Johnson responded affirmatively. She encouraged other Towns place ads in the same manner.

With regard to the Gore Mountain Interconnect ribbon cutting to be held January 29th, Mr. Goodspeed thanked Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, for the email distribution of the event details and he noted conditions were excellent for skiing. He stated that he anticipated a representative of Governor Cuomo's Office, Senator Little and Assemblywoman Sayward would be in attendance. The long and complicated project, he expounded, spanned 30 years and he noted that Senator Little had been

instrumental in securing funding for the Interconnect chair lift. He also credited former Governor Pataki and Congresswoman Sayward for their efforts to secure funding for a related lift. He noted the visible growth within the business district in North Creek. With regard to the shuttle service, Mr. Goodspeed cited the Warren County Board of Supervisors for Occupancy Tax funding; the Town of Johnsbury, and the private sector, whose contributions attributed to portions of the funding. Prior to the opening of the lift, he observed skiers utilizing the associated parking area to meet the shuttle and commute to work. Following much discussion and hard work, he declared, the development of Gore Mountain in this manner had come to fruition. He announced the ribbon cutting scheduled for 10:30 a.m. January 29th, as a great day for upstate NY.

Ms. Johnson announced that Senator Little was scheduled to conduct a Tourism Conference to be held on Friday, February 4, 2011 at West Mountain Ski Center, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Loeb asked what regional promotional advertising opportunity might be presented as a result of Glens Falls native Jimmer Fredette, the local graduate and athlete, who reached acclaim as a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball player. He noted that his name which had appeared in ESPN news and the Wall Street Journal, would be in the forefront for the next several months as his professional career unfolded. Mr. Loeb added that this presented a unique and valuable window of opportunity for the County. Mr. Geraghty informed that the next Brigham Young University game would be nationally televised on February 24th on CBS. He also noted that ESPN and Sports Illustrated Magazine had featured Mr. Fredette and mentioned Glens Falls as well as the upstate New York area. Mr. Girard apprised of parameters relative to NCAA rules and regulations which pertained to name recognition and advertising, but noted that the Tourism Department would research the matter.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Goodspeed, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 12:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist